

All but a handful of foreign correspondents have left the city, which used to be the listening post from which events throughout the Middle East were reported. All Western embassies had maintained regional sections here, but have now relocated them.

The number of foreigners, including Arabs, in Lebanon once totaled 400,000, living among three million Lebanese in a country the size of Connecticut. Not more than a tenth that number of foreigners are in Beirut now. The Westerners are a mere few hundred. •

Not even the Chinese have been spared. China's Embassy, in a Moslem suburb, was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade in February.

"Why us?" an Arabic-speaking Chinese diplomat said, when he accompanied his Ambassador to the Foreign Ministry in East Beirut to lodge a complaint. There was no answer to the question.

Formerly, 300 Chinese lived in the 10-story building housing the embassy, complete with a swimming pool and Ping-Pong tables. Only 17 officials now reside there.

Arab foreigners have not done much better. Of 22 Arab ambassadors, only those from Algeria and Southern Yemen felt safe enough to stay. _____